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## GENERAL PERSHING ENDORSES RANK FOR NURSES

On Friday, October 31, the Senate and the House Military Affairs Committees of Congress met jointly to hear the views of General Pershing on Army Reorganization. The General first made a formal general statement of his opinion on a wide range of subjects and then answered questions. The following excerpts give his position on Rank for Nurses. They are a transcript from the notes of the official stenographer and have not been edited or revised in any way.<sup>1</sup>

### FORMAL STATEMENT ON RANK FOR NURSES

GEN. PERSHING. The Army Nurse Corps has performed most excellent service abroad. It contained many women of superior ability, and it seems to me as a recognition of the splendid services of the American women in that Corps they should be given some rank, some status. I am in favor of giving them rank up to and including the rank of second lieutenant, which does not now appear in the Medical Department, and I believe the bestowal of that rank would give the Nurse Corps the necessary military authority to carry out the instructions of the medical officers and would also have the effect of attracting to the Corps the best class of women.

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON RANK

MR. KAHN. (Julius Kahn, Republican, of San Francisco, Chairman of House Military Affairs Committee.) This morning you said you would recommend the giving of the rank of second lieutenant to the army nurses. Was not the custom among the other countries that participated in the war to give nurses the relative rank and pay of some officer of the army, but not to designate them as lieutenants or captains?

GEN. PERSHING. I think that is the practice in the British service.

MR. KAHN. In the British service?

GEN. PERSHING. Yes.

MR. KAHN. Did it work out satisfactorily?

GEN. PERSHING. As far as I know, it has been very satisfactory to the British.

MR. KAHN. Do you think it would be better to create some special rank for the nursing corps rather than the ranks that prevail in the combat troops of the army?

GEN. PERSHING. Well, I have thought about it a good deal, and it is rather a puzzling question, Mr. Chairman. Whatever would give the nurses a position by which they could enforce compliance with their instructions is what should be done. You find a good many men in the hospitals who are not inclined to obey the orders of a nurse, fellows who are perhaps not any too well disciplined under any circumstances, and the nurses have had in many cases a rather hard time in getting along with some of those men. I am only interested in getting them a standing that will enable them to carry out their duties efficiently.

MR. KAHN. In favor of giving them some rank, but you have no preference as to what it will be?

<sup>1</sup> The italics are ours.

GEN. PERSHING. I must say, I have not.

MR. GREENE. (Frank L. Greene, Republican, Island Pond, Vermont, member of House Military Affairs Committee.) Is it not an axiom of the service that any man who is carrying an order of his superior in that duty to another person carries the order of the superior regardless of rank, and if the order is disobeyed he is disobeying the order of the superior?

GEN. PERSHING. There is a lot of conflict involved in that question.

MR. GREENE. I understand there is. I am speaking only of the general principle. If you designate somebody in a hospital to do something irrespective of grade or rank, that order would have to be carried out, and anybody who sought to interfere would be disobeying the order?

GEN. PERSHING. That very frequently happens.

MR. GREENE. Does it make any difference how many stages of rank intervene between you and the one to whom the order is directed, as to who it is brought by when it comes from the one source, the one who could give such an order?

GEN. PERSHING. In those cases where certain duties are allotted to juniors, *they are in a better position to carry out those duties if they have the rank which would naturally give them control over the persons that are under control.*

MR. GREENE. The order gives them control, however?

GEN. PERSHING. *I cannot say it always does.*

MR. GREENE. Officially it does?

GEN. PERSHING. *There is a great deal of difference between giving an order and having it carried out.* If an officer is ordered to execute an order involving some one of superior rank, who questions the order, and there is no one man on the spot to settle the difference, it involves a lot of difficulty.

MR. GREENE. Would the giving of military rank such as is embodied with the combat troops to people in hospitals tend eventually to win them away to more regard for their rank than for the duty they were assigned to? It has been found, I believe, in the service that while a dentist is a first lieutenant, he will stand back of the chair and draw a tooth, but as he begins to go up the grades he is more interested in assigning somebody else to that function than he is to performing it himself. Is that same thing true in regard to veterinaries and other people who are not distinctly military men, but are engaged in civilian auxiliary functions attached to the army? Is there a danger in permitting military rank and grade to be scattered too promiscuously through these services?

GEN. PERSHING. You refer to the dental rank?

MR. GREENE. I only used that as an illustration. We all have to come to the dentist sooner or later, and the army finds it out as soon as anybody else.

GEN. PERSHING. I know certain colonels in the dental corps who do not hesitate to draw teeth.

MR. GREENE. Are those exceptions that prove the rule, General?

GEN. PERSHING. Well, this whole question is a very interesting one, *but it seems to me if you require certain things to be done by a military individual which compels him to exercise authority over others, he must have, or he is better off if he has, the rank to do it.*

MR. GREENE. Then, if you apply that logically, the sentry on post No. 2 should have the same rank, and yet everybody knows it is death to any one to disobey his orders.

GEN. PERSHING. That is the reason we give him a gun.

MR. GREENE. But he is a private.

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GEN. PERSHING. If we would give nurses *guns*, we would not need to give them *rank*.

MR. GREENE. I dare say. This question is interesting in this sense, that when we try to establish military grades of greater numbers than we have now, we are confronted with the popular misunderstanding of the subject which makes them fail to distinguish between men of different rank.

GEN. PERSHING. I quite appreciate your point in the matter, and the same criticism is very frequently made by the army people themselves, but as I said with reference to this question of giving rank to nurses, the only point I would make is to place them in a position where they might not be embarrassed so much in the carrying out of their orders.

SENATOR WADSWORTH. (James W. Wadsworth, Jr., Republican, of Groveland, New York, Chairman of Senate Military Affairs Committee). As I understand it, General, they request a little sign of rank, an insignia, something to indicate authority that they have to meet an emergency, which does not come up very often, but sometimes is very important.

GEN. PERSHING. Yes.

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### THE MALARIA PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH

*Conveyance.*—Without going into the question of conveyance of malaria by the mosquitoes, I will lay down a few postulates:

1. Malaria is caused by parasites in the blood of the person suffering from it. Persons with such parasites in their blood are infected with malaria.

2. Those parasites were injected into the person by the bite of a mosquito infected with the parasite. Man receives infection in no other way.

3. The mosquito herself received this infection by having previously fed on a person whose blood contained such parasites. The mosquito acquires infection in no other way.

4. The only mosquitoes which are infected with malaria are those of the genus *Anopheles*, and not all species of *Anopheles* are efficient carriers of malaria.

The change from man to the mosquito and back again is necessary for the continuous existence of the parasites, just as necessary as that change for the germ of wheat by which it is alternately in the ground and in the air. The malaria parasite cannot live indefinitely in the mosquito; it cannot live indefinitely, although much longer, in man. Without this continued change between the two hosts the parasite dies. This, then, gives us our clue for malaria control: (1) Keep infected mosquitoes away from man; or (2) keep mosquitoes away from infected men. The control of either host—the mosquito or the man—will eliminate malaria.

*Area of Prevalence.*—One encouraging fact about malaria in the United States is that the area of prevalence, certainly the area in which it is severe, is lessening. In eastern North Carolina there is not now one-third of the malaria there was in the eighties. I think the same is generally true, though, perhaps, not to the same degree, in all of the cotton states. On the other hand, it has increased in some sections of these and other states.—By H. R. Carter, U. S. Public Health Service.